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O R 171130Z FEB 79
FM AMEMBASSY KABUL
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACI IMMEDIATE 2242
INFO AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD
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FOR: NEA/PAB

DEPT: PLEASE PASS USICA WASHDC

E.O. 12065: GDS 2/17/85 (FLATIN, BRUCE A.) DR-P
TAGS: PINR, PINS, PEPR, ASEC, AF
SUBJECT: POLICE COMMANDANT TAROON SOVIET PRESENCE AT SCENE OF
SHOOTING OF AMBASSADOR DUBS

REF: KABUL 1133

1. (C-ENTIRE TEXT).

2. SUMMARY: ON FEBRUARY 16, DURING A DISCUSSION WITH TWO JOURNALISTS WHO HAD BEEN TAKEN TO HIS OFFICE FOLLOWING THEIR DETENTION AFGHANISTAN'S GENERAL COMMANDANT OF POLICE, SAYED DAUDU TAROON, DENIED THAT ANY RUSSIANS HAD BEEN PRESENT AT THE KABUL HOTEL AT THE TIME OF THE SHOOTING OF AMBASSADOR DUBS. END SUMMARY.

3. AT APPROXIMATELY 3:30 P.M. FEBRUARY 16, TWO JOURNALISTS, THOMAS LIPPAN, AN AMERICAN ("WASHINGTON POST") AND DAVID HOUSEGO, A BRITISH CITIZEN ("FINANCIAL TIMES") WERE DETAINED BY THE AFGHAN POLICE AFTER THEY HAD REFUSED TO TURN THEIR TAXI OVER TO A POLICEMAN WHO HAD COMMANDEERED IT. AFTER BEING LED THROUGH A SERIES OF OFFICES (A FULL ACCOUNT OF THEIR EXPERIENCE IS BEING TRANSMITTED BY MEMCON), THEY ULTIMATELY WERE BROUGHT TO THE OFFICE OF AFGHANISTAN'S COMMANDANT OF POLICE, MAJOR SAYED DAUDU TAROON.

4. TAROON COMPLAINED THAT THE JOURNALISTS HAD ENTERED THE COUNTRY UNDER FALSE PRETENSES WHEN THEY HAD ENTERED ON TOURIST VISAS AT KABUL AIRPORT. HE SAID THAT, AS JOURNALISTS, THEY SHOULD HAVE FIRST CONTACTED THE MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS PRIOR TO COMING TO THE DRA TO SEEK THE REQUIRED PRESS ACCREDITATION. WHEN THEY TOLD HIM THAT THEY HAD CLEARLY PRINTED "JOURNALIST" UNDER "PROFESSION" ON THE VISA APPLICATIONS AT THE AIRPORT, HE ACTED SURPRISED AND APPEARED TAKEN ABACK THAT ANY JOURNALIST COULD SIMPLY ENTER THE COUNTRY ON A TOURIST VISA GIVEN AT THE AIRPORT. (THEY SEEMED TO SENSE THAT HE WOULD HAVE THIS POLICY CHANGED SOON.)

5. TAROON THEN TOLD HOUSEGO AND LIPPAN THEY WERE FREE TO GO, AND ASKED WHETHER THEY HAD ANY QUESTIONS BEFORE THEIR DEPARTURE. THEY BEGAN WITH DIRECT ONE REGARDING THE DEATH OF AMBASSADOR DUBS. TAROON REPLIED THAT HE COULD NOT ANSWER "TOURISTS" QUESTIONS ABOUT THE MATTER. HE THEN BEGAN MAKING PHONE CALLS SEEKING TO ESTABLISH THEIR BONA FIDES AS JOURNALISTS. THEY GAVE HIM THEIR CARDS, AND HE READ OUT THEIR NAMES OVER THE PHONE TO SOMEONE, THEY THINK, IN THE MFA. HE ALSO SENT FOR A TRANSLATOR. A MAN IDENTIFYING HIMSELF AS THE "CHIEF OF THE FIRE BRIGADE" APPEARED. SUDDENLY, TAROON'S BEHAVIOR TOWARD THE TWO MEN CHANGED ABRUPTLY. HE APPEARED TO RELAX. ON A CHANCE, HOUSEGO ASKED HIM IF HE WOULD ANSWER ANY QUESTIONS. HE REPLIED THAT HE WOULD.

6. HOUSEGO ASKED HIM ABOUT THE VENTS AT THE KABUL HOTEL LEADING TO AMBASSADOR DUBS' DEATH. TAROON STUCK TO THE DRA GOVERNMENT

STORY. HE SAID THE TERRORISTS DEMANDED THE RELEASE OF AMAN CALLED BAHIR-UD-DINBAES. TAROON CALLED HIM A "HILL COUNTRY BANDIT FROM THE NORTH WHO WAS ACTIVE UNDER THE KING, WAS ARRESTED BY DAUDU, AND ESCAPED LAST JULY." HOUSEGO ASKED HIM IF HE HAD HEARD OF A SHIITE LEADER NAMED BAHRUDDIN WAIZ WHO HE EXPLAINED WAS ONE OF THREE THIEVES THE GOVERNMENT HAD APPARENTLY ARRESTED. TAROON CLAIMED HE HAD NEVER HEARD OF THE MAN BEFORE.

7. TAROON SAID THAT DURING NEGOTIATIONS AT THE KABUL HOTEL HE HAD SENT "ONE OF HIS GERMAN-SPEAKING MEN" TO SPEAK WITH THE AMBASSADOR IN GERMAN. (COMMENT: IN FACT, AN AMERICAN EMBASSY OFFICER WAS ASKED BY THE POLICE TO PERFORM THIS FUNCTION AT ONE POINT IN THE EPISODE.) HE SAID THAT HIS MAN DID NOT TELL THE TERRORISTS THAT BAHIR-UD-DIN BAES HAD ESCAPED, BUT THAT THE POLICE PROMISED

THEY WERE BRINGING HIM TO THEM IN ORDER TO BUY TIME.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE A/CDC/MR

REVIEWED BY *MA/Cpm* DATE *2-13-81*

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8. TAROON CATEGORICALLY DENIED THAT THERE WERE ANY SOVIETS PRESENT AT THE HOTEL DURING THE INCIDENT. HE CLAIMED THAT THE AFGHANS RAN THE WHOLE SHOW. WHEN HOUSEGO TRIED TO CONTRADICT HIM, HE REPEATED THAT NO RUSSIANS HAD BEEN AT THE HOTEL AT ALL.

9. CONCERNING THE INVESTIGATION INTO THE AMBASSADOR'S ASSASSINATION, TAROON CLAIMED THAT IF THE AFGHANS NEED U.S. HELP, THEY WOULD ASK FOR IT AND IF THE AMERICANS NEED AFGHAN HELP, THEY SHOULD ASK FOR IT. THEN HE STATED THAT, AFTER ALL, THE AMERICANS HAD BEEN AT THE KABUL HOTEL. HE PRODUCED THE SAME NICKLE-PLATED REVOLVER AND HOLSTER THE TWO CORRESPONDENTS HAD EARLIER SEEN IN ANOTHER POLICE OFFICE, AND SAID SMILINGLY THAT ONE OF HIS MEN HAD TAKEN IT FROM THE U.S. EMBASSY SECURITY OFFICER AT THE HOTEL. HE APPEARED TO BE DELIGHTED ABOUT THIS. (IT WAS RETURNED TO THE CHARGE THE NEXT DAY BY DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER SHAH MOHAMMAD DOST.) HE GAVE THE TWO MEN THE STRONG IMPRESSION THAT FURTHER INVESTIGATIONS INTO THE AMBASSADOR'S DEATH WOULD BE FRUITLESS BECAUSE THE FOURTH TERRORIST HAD "DIED IN THE HOSPITAL."

10. TAROON TOLD THEM THAT HE KNEW MRS. DUBS HAD BEEN CRYING AT THE AIRPORT WHEN SHE CAME OFF THE AIRPLANE, AND HE SAID "MY PERSONAL GRIEF IS AS GREAT AS HERS."

11. COMMENT: MR. HOUSEGO FELT QUITE CLEARLY THAT TAROON DOES NOT WANT JOURNALISTS AROUND. MR. LIPPMAN SAID, AS THEY WERE LEAVING TAROON'S OFFICE, "I HOPE WE MEET AGAIN UNDER HAPPIER CIRCUMSTANCES." TAROON REPLIED, "PERHAPS." THEY DESCRIBED TAROON'S MOODS DURING NEARLY TWO HOURS OF TALK WITH HIM AS "WONDERFUL," "LIVELY," "SERIOUS." THEY THINK HIS KNOWLEDGE OF ENGLISH IS BETTER THAN HE LEADS PEOPLE TO BELIEVE. THEY SAID HE CALLED THE BBC "VICIOUS, FULL OF LIES."

12. TAROON'S NONSENSICAL CLAIM THAT NO SOVIETS WERE AT THE HOTEL MAY BE THE STORY THE AFGHAN GOVERNMENT WISHES THE WORLD TO BELIEVE. THIS VERSION IS CONTRADICTED BY THE EYEWITNESS REPORTS OF AMERICAN EMBASSY OFFICERS WHO WERE THERE, MANY OF WHOM HELD SEVERAL DISCUSSIONS WITH SERGEI BAKHTURIN, THE SECURITY OFFICER AT THE SOVIET EMBASSY, AND SOVIET POLICE ADVISORS AT THE SCENE.
AMSTUTZ

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